

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 092440

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

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FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO MOSCOW BELGRADE BUCHAREST
WARSAW SOFIA BUDAPEST PRAGUE MADRID ATHENS LISBON VIENNA
FROM PARIS DTD 05 APRIL 1976 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 09968

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IT, FR

SUBJECT: ITALY: QUAI IMPRESSIONS AFTER CONSULAR
CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY: IN WAKE FRENCH CONSULAR CONFERENCE IN
ROME, QUAI THINKS CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRACY STILL HAS SLIGHT
CHANCE. HOWEVER, IN THIS VIEW, PCI HAS BECOME ONLY
MAGNETIC MOVEMENT EMBRACING ELEMENTS ALL CLASSES,
INCLUDING SUPPORT OF IMPORTANT PARTS ITALIAN MANAGEMENT.
AS A RESULT, QUAI HINTS AT SOMEWHAT GREATER GOF EFFORT
TO SUPPORT ITALIAN CD GOVERNMENT HENCEFORTH. LABCOUNS
RECEIVED PARALLEL ACCOUNT SUBMITTED SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY.

2. QUAI ITALIAN DESK OFFICER DEBENEST, WHO ATTENDED
FRENCH EMBASSY ROME MEETING WITH PRINCIPAL OFFICERS
FRENCH CONSULATES IN ITALY LAST WEEK, TELLS US THAT
QUAI'S MAIN CONCLUSION WAS THAT PCI WAS NO LONGER "WORK-
ING CLASS PARTY" IN TRADITIONAL SENSE BUT HAS BECOME
PARTY EMBRACING ELEMENTS OF ALL CLASSES AS ITALY'S ONLY
SEEMINGLY VIABLE MOVEMENT OF REFORM. IN ADDITION TO
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PAGE 02 STATE 092440

IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROADERS, PCI HAS

EVEN GAINED SYMPATHY OF SIGNIFICANT PARTS OF ITALIAN MANAGEMENT; WHO, BEING ALREADY EITHER NATIONALIZED OR HEAVILY CAUGHT UP IN BUREAUCRATIC PROBLEMS, REPORTEDLY FEEL THAT WORKING WITH PCI MAY BE EASIER THAN PRESENT SITUATION.

3. MOREOVER, QUAI ARGUES, PCI NO LONGER VIEWED IN ITALY AS SOVIET STALKING HORSE. ITALIAN PUBLIC HAS LARGELY ACCEPTED BERLINGUER'S ASSERTIONS AT FACE VALUE THAT HE IS WESTERN EUROPEAN AND WOULD SUPPORT ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. QUAI THEREFORE CONCLUDES THAT U.S. CRITICAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS REGARDING PCI COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. IN FACT DEBENEST WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT U.S. STATEMENTS, AS WELL AS VATICAN RIGIDITY ON VARIOUS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING MOST RECENTLY ON ABORTION LAWS, MAY CONVINCE CRITICAL PERCENTAGE OF ITALIAN MODERATES NOT TO CONTINUE TO RESIST PCI. FOR PRESENT DEBENEST SAYS PCI CAPTURE OF ROME CITY GOVERNMENT SEEMED VIRTUALLY CERTAIN. ON OTHER HAND, PCI IS SO FAR NOT PUSHING HARD TO TAKE OVER POWER NATIONALLY, AT LEAST FOR NEXT YEAR OR TWO, PERHAPS BECAUSE IT DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT QUALIFIED CADRES TO RUN THE MYRIAD TECHNICAL JOBS IN THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE ECONOMY RELEVANT TO THE JOB THE PCI PROMISED TO DO. EVEN SO, QUAI CONCLUDES THE PCI HAS BECOME THE ONLY MOVEMENT IN ITALY ABLE HOLD OUT HOPES FOR A BETTER FUTURE AND SO TO EXERT MAGNETISM IN THE COUNTRY.

4. QUAI'S CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRACY IN ITALY IS, NEVERTHELESS, NOT COMPLETELY HOPELESS. DEBENEST ADMITTED THAT NO ONE SAW MUCH PROSPECT FOR THE PRESENT FOR NEW CENTER-LEFT COALITION, AND STRESSED THAT SOCIALISTS HAD DONE IRREPARABLE DAMAGE BY THEIR ABSTENTION IN LAST MONTHS. EVEN SO, THE RECENT CRHIS-TIAN-DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE, FOR ALL ITS DISAPPOINTING RESULTS, AT LEAST MADE CLEAR THAT THE PARTY WAS NOW REALLY LOOKING TOWARD INTERNAL REFORM. THIS AT LEAST WAS A GOOD SIGN, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE WAS PROBABLY CERTAIN TIME LEFT TO MANEUVER. QUAI THEREFORE DOES NOT YET COMPLETELY RULE OUT POSSIBILITY THAT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS COULD STILL BRING ABOUT ENOUGH CHANGES TO

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PAGE 03 STATE 092440

ATTRACT OTHERS INTO A NEW MORE STABLE COALITION. FOR NOW, HOWEVER, A "GOVERNMENT OF UNION," EMBRACING ALL PARTIES SEEMED THE MORE PROBABLY INTERIM SOLUTION. AS FOR ITALIAN ELECTIONS, DEBENEST REITERATED PREVIOUS QUAI ANALYSES TO EFFEC THAT THEY DID NOT SEEM LIKELY THIS YEAR, UNLESS SOME UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES LIKE THE CURRENT ABORTION CONTROVERSY PRECIPITATES THEM UNEXPEC-
TEDLY. IN THAT CASE THE PCI COULD WELL FIND ITSELF IN

POWER WILLY-NILLY.

5. AS FOR POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR FRANCE, DEBENEST FOR FIRST TIME IN OUR RECOLLECTION SAID THAT, WITH PROTUGAL ON THE MEND, ITALY WAS RAPIDLY BECOMING QUAT'S NUMBER ONE PROBLEM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. ASKED WHA THIS MEAN IN CONCRETE TERMS DEBENEST SAID ONLY THAT IT WOULD MEAN MORE CONCERTED EFFORT ON THE PART OF GOF TO GIVE MORO MORE PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND PERHAPS TO HELP ECONOMICALLY AS WELL. ASKED WHAT FORM THAT MIGHT TAKE, DEBENEST SAID ONLY THAT THAT REMAINED TO BE SEEN. BUT DID ADMIT FAINT POSSIBILITY REPEAT POSSIBILITY OF A GISCARD "WORKING VISIT" IN ROME LATER THIS YEAR. IN ANY CASE GOF WOULD HENCEFORTH TRY TO PITCH IN A LITTLE HARDER THAN HERETOFORE TO HELP KEEP THINGS GLUED TOGETHER IN ROME. RUSH UNQTE ROBINSON

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